

they were looking very well when I left. I was brought up as a gardener. Considering the treatment the fruit trees and vegetables receive they do remarkably well. Although they have not been well treated, I have never known trees bear better in England. The soil and climate are favourable for the growth of a great many British fruits. Currants grow remarkably well.

828. Do you know Tarndale?—Yes. I have not seen the gardens there, but the country is fit for similar cultivations. Some of the table land is very good. The low lands are dried-up lakes, and the sediment or deposits are very rich.

829. Do you know the Leaderdale and Acheron Valleys?—I crossed the mouth of them, and the description given of them is correct.

830. Do you think it is possible for them to support families there?—Yes; I am quite satisfied that they would.

831. Supposing the land were open for settlement, and a means of communication to it existed, is it the sort of place where you would settle down, cultivate, and make a living?—Yes. I came from Cumberland, and the land at Tarndale is equally as good as the land in Cumberland. At Coldwater Creek the country is deceptive; unless you follow up the valleys you do not see what they contain. People passing through know comparatively nothing about the country unless they explore the valleys. For instance, Coldwater Creek has a narrow exit, and runs through a wild narrow gorge, and then opens up into a sort of plain with very good land.

832. Can you form an idea of how many acres of that sort of land there might be in Coldwater Creek?—I believe there are 1,000 acres of land in this valley suitable for cattle, and 500 acres for cultivation. Judge's Creek passes out of a wild ravine; when you go up the ravines there are grassy plains and flats. There are a great many cattle in that creek.

833. Would a settler be able to rear his cattle and have a comfortable homestead in Judge's Creek?—There would be room for comfortable homesteads for one or two men in Judge's Creek. There are other valleys of a similar character in that district, and also down the Buller.

834. Why are these not already settled?—I believe it is through the difficulty of want of roads to a market.

Mr. J. C. RICHMOND, Secretary to the Railway Committee, examined.

835. *Mr. Fell.*] You are by profession an engineer?—Yes.

836. You have had experience in planning and constructing railways?—Yes, in England, Algeria, and Belgium. I was brought up to the profession in England, and served under Mr. Brunel on the western railways for some years. I am familiar with the art of laying out railways, and have assisted in a great many. I was at work in Belgium on the Luxemburg Railway. On my last visit to Europe I constructed a railway in Algeria.

837. Therefore you may be said to have had considerable experience in the laying-out and construction of railway lines?—Yes, sufficient to be able to criticise the facilities and suitability of a country for the formation of railways, and to criticise the various schemes that are before the Commission.

838. I believe in former years you held the office of Commissioner of Crown Lands for this province?—Yes, for about three years. I also held at the same time the office of Provincial Secretary.

839. You also held office under the Crown as a Minister?—Yes.

840. In your capacity as Provincial Secretary and Crown Lands Commissioner, I believe you had occasion more than once to visit the land lying in the neighbourhood of Tarndale, from the Clarence and Waiau?—Yes; I thought it was part of the business of the Commissioner to become acquainted as soon as possible with the whole estate of which he was the chief officer. At the time I entered on the office, the cream of the land in the Amuri had been sold, and it was my business to endeavour to learn if there was any more colonizable land. I visited the southern district for the further purpose of advising the Land Board in the assessment of other lands likely to be purchased under the regulations. Some of the second-class runs in the Hurunui and Hanmer Plains were not entirely purchased, but they were about to be purchased.

841. Will you state generally your opinion of the character of the land round about that district with regard to its capacity for carrying a population, if it were accessible to a market?—I was twice over that part of the country to which the attention of the Commission has been directed. I made two almost bee-lines across the country on horseback, so as to form some general idea of the character of the land. I made notes at the time, but I am sorry to say that they were never embodied in any report, as it was not called for. I have not the notes at hand, and I can only give my general impressions of the country. I should certainly not say it is an agricultural country in any proper sense. I have no doubt of the correctness of the statements of several witnesses as to the existence of considerable areas of land capable of tillage. Not only on the flats but even on some parts of the hillsides the land could be ploughed. In some seasons of the year I think no one could cross that country and say that it has not a fertile soil. I have seen the Cheviot Hills, a good deal of the Canterbury Plains, and a large part of Otago, and I am sure that no better grass land exists in any part of the country. My own idea at the time was that, if the country could be rendered accessible, its fittest occupation was for either small grazing farms or dairy farms. I founded my opinion upon general observations as to the quality of the existing vegetation. There is certainly a large quantity of land that may fairly be called downs; it is closely grassed, with very little rock cropping out. Interspersed among these are rough hills; but I think, taking the line from Tarndale to the Waiau-uwha, a very large proportion—certainly more than one-half of the country—is good rolling grass hills, not much broken with rock, and which in many places could be ploughed. The valleys are narrow in general. Some of the valleys, the Waiau-uwha and its tributaries, lying under the Spenser Mountains, appeared to be very wet, so that one went very cautiously on horseback; the ground was mossy, and the moss held the water like a sponge. I have been informed, and I have no reason to doubt the statement, that the mere traffic of cattle on that land has since brought it into a condition of good grass land. The scheme which presented itself to my mind was to divide the country into blocks of, say, from 300 to 500 acres, each block with from 50 to 100 acres of arable land, as near as it could be got, and selling them for